

Tough Northerners Dominate Replay

By 'Nova'

Spennymoor United 2, Wycombe Wanderers 1

UNFASHIONABLE Spennymoor United shattered Wycombe Wanderers' hopes of further Amateur Cup glory on Saturday when they gained a narrow, but deserved, single-goal victory in the third round replay at Spennymoor.

Urged on by nearly 4,000 almost fanatical fans, the dedicated young Spennymoor men put their side nearer to Wembley than they have been for more than a quarter of a century.

But there can be no grumbles from Wycombe supporters or players about the result. The Wanderers, although slightly off-key in some departments, played hard, fast and occasionally skilfully, but the tough and very fit Northerners took everything without flinching and then hit back like real thoroughbreds.

Spennymoor won simply because they were the better balanced side. They had no one to match the often brilliant Bunting, the ice-cool Beck and Pullin, or the side-stepping, swerving Worley. But they had eleven young and enthusiastic players willing to run themselves into exhaustion for the club.

As individuals the "Moors" players were only average—but blended expertly together they have become a most promising cup-fighting unit.

As in the first meeting of the two teams, the issue was virtually settled in the five-minute period before half-time. On Saturday the home side were leading by a somewhat disputed penalty goal when Lowen, apparently yards off-side, shot home a surprise equaliser—a surprise because the Moors might have already been three or four goals in front.

But instead of losing heart, Spennymoor hit straight back and within a minute had taken the lead again. A furious Wycombe onslaught in the second half, in which we saw a little of the vintage Worley, some spirited attempts from Horseman, and much courageous and skilful attacking play from the Wanderers' two full-backs, failed to prise open a path in the often creaking Spennymoor defence.

THOSE 'IFS'

If the Wycombe attacks had been a little less lopsided, if Balson and Hodges had shown a little of their usual form, or if Maharg had been able to control his natural exuberance and helped Lewis to take charge in midfield, Wycombe might not only have scraped a draw but won through.

Although the game never approached the thrilling heights of the Whitley Bay match, it was exciting enough, especially midway through the second half, when the Wanderers threw everything into a last desperate bid.

Somehow the atmosphere was not right for a match of such importance. Spennymoor's bumpy and sloping pitch, with two small enclosures on either side of the pitch, seemed more suited to Spartan or Hellenic League football.

But any misgivings about the size of their task the Wanderers may have had were dispelled when they stepped out into the bright, warm sunshine and found

themselves cheered on by nearly 200 of their own supporters. And it seemed to be a good omen when Roystone won the toss and ruined the home side's plan by deciding to kick uphill in the first half.

NO MERCY!

The Spennymoor players, friendly and chatty before the game, soon lost their hospitality when the whistle sounded. Within minutes of the start Beck was receiving attention for a bleeding nose after saving a pile-driver from McGeorge on the goal-line. While he was still recovering left-winger Brown cut inside twice and knocked the wind from Bunting's body with two fierce drives.

Still the home side showed no mercy and in one spell three desperate goal-line clearances by defenders kept the Wanderers in the game. Then, just when it seemed that the fierce opening storm had been weathered, disaster overtook the Wanderers.

Roystone, who had been covering up well, challenged Brown after Beck had been beaten. The winger tried to get in a centre but the ball struck Roystone and the linesman immediately flagged. Despite heated appeals, the "Moors" were awarded a penalty and Brown made no mistake from the spot.

Wycombe made a brief rally and a splendid move on the right ended with Lowen leaping high above a crowd of players to nod the ball goalwards. But the ball struck the woodwork and was cleared.

INSPIRED BUNTING

Spennymoor made the most of their luck and Bunting, in inspired form, made a series of courageous dives.

Then suddenly Wycombe struck back. A long lob from Worley found Lowen clear inside the penalty area, but apparently off-side. He turned quickly and prodded the ball past Ellen while the home defenders waited appealing for a never-to-be-heard whistle from the referee.

Wycombe's joy lasted less than two minutes, for Spennymoor hit back quickly and savagely. Some untidy right-wing play ended with Morris breaking goalwards. While still over 30 yards out and with a line of hovering defenders in front of him he let fly with a terrific shot which hit the back of the net while Bunting was still groping in mid-air.

With the slope in their favour for the second period a single goal disadvantage did not seem too much for Wycombe to make up, and though Balson just failed to equalise with a first-time flick in the first seconds, their hopes were high.

Horseman broke away and centred and the ball finished in the back of the net—but the linesman ruled that the ball had already gone over the line!

LAST HOPE

With only a quarter of an hour remaining both sides lost some of their poise and vigorous bodily contact became the order of the day. Wycombe's last hope lay with Worley and Beck, their two most experienced and polished players, but their often brilliant approach work was halted by thundering tackles and huge clearances.

It was from these long clearances that the home side almost doubled their score. With all the Wycombe defenders bar Roystone up on the attack, Fawell and Banks twice broke clear but somehow Bunting saved magnificently.

Spennymoor—B. Ellen; G. Defty, B. Berryman; A. Icton, P. Joyce, A. West; B. Morris, J. McGeorge, D. Fawell, K. Banks, J. Brown.

Wycombe—C. Bunting; J. Beck, G. Pullin; G. Maharg, P. Roystone, A. Lewis; L. Worley, T. Horseman, P. Lowen, J. Balson, P. Hodges.